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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 SSC-01

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PRS-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 FRB-03 /076 W
---------- 074329
R 170834Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3253
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 1469

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HU
SUBJ: SHAKE-UP OF GOH LEADERSHIP

1. MAY 15 COMMUNIQUE OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL ANNOUNCED RETIREMENT OF PRIME MINISTER JENO FOCK. SAID FOCK PUT ON RETIRED LIST "AT HIS OWN REQUEST IN VIEW OF STATE OF HIS HEALTH". REPLACEMENT IS VICE PREMIER GYORGY LAZAR, SPECIALIST ON CEMA INTEGRATION AND NATIONAL PLANNING. HEAVY INDUSTRY MINISTER GYULA SZEKER MOVES INTO VICE PREMIER POST AND LAZAR'S FORMER POSITION AS HEAD OF NATIONAL PLANNING OFFICE GIVEN TO VICE PREMIER ISTVAN HUSZAR. PRESS SAYS CHANGES MADE BY PATRIOTIC PEOPLE'S FRONT AFTER "RECOMMENDATIONS" BY HSWP CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

2. RUMORS OF FOCK'S REPLACEMENT HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING IN BUDAPEST WITH GREAT INTENSITY FOR PAST YEAR. SPECULATION SHARPLY INCREASED DURING 11TH PARTY CONGRESS IN MARCH INCITED BY ELEVATION OF LAZAR TO POLITBURO AND FOCK'S UNUSUALLY SELF-CRITICAL SPEECH
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ATTACKING INEFFICIENCY OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (BUDAPEST 814).

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THIS SPECULATION FED BY RECOLLECTION OF FOCK'S NOW FAMOUS AIRPORT SPEECH IN 1972 SHARPLY CRITICAL OF SOVIETS AND MADE UPON HIS RETURN FROM VISIT TO MOSCOW. EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE OFTEN SPOKEN OF SOVIET UNHAPPINESS WITH FOCK'S AGGRESSIVE PURSUIT OF AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY.

3. TIMING OF CHANGES IS SOMEWHAT CURIOUS. NORMALLY, ONE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED FOCK TO BE REMOVED AFTER JUNE 15 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WHEN IN ORDINARY COURSE OF EVENTS NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FORMED. THERE ARISES, THEREFORE, THE QUESTION OF WHY SUCH URGENCY?
URGENCY CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY KADAR'S DESIRE TO HAVE LAZAR TAKE OVER AS PRIME MINISTER BEFORE UPCOMING MEETING OF CEMA PRIME MINISTERS (BUDAPEST 1416) IN LATE JUNE. THIS COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN DONE AFTER JUNE 15 ELECTIONS. PERHAPS FOCK IS REALLY ILL. IN ANY CASE,
WHATEVER REASON FOR FOCK'S RETIRMENT, LAME EXCUSE PUT FORWARD WILL AROUSE GREAT SPECULATION ABROAD AS TO SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS
"RETIREMENT"
AND SERIOUS CONCERN AT HOME AMONG HUNGARIANS WELL AWARE OF FOCK'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOVIETS.

4. LAZAR IS SOMEWHAT COLORLESS TECHNOCRAT WHO DURING PAST YEAR HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME DEALING WITH CEMA INTEGRATION. HE IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE CAUTIOUS, CAREFUL MAN, MORE CONSERVATIVE IN OUTLOOK THAN HUSZAR (BUDAPEST 827), PROBABLY HIS MAIN COMPETITOR FOR POST OF PRIME MINISTER. HIS REPLACEMENT OF FOCK MAY SIGNAL SOME-WHAT LESS INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC POLICY IN FUTURE. LAZAR IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE AS FORCEFUL A POLITICAL LEADER AS FOCK WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN HIS SELECTION IF, IN FACT, SOVIETS ARE BEHIND THE CHANGE. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY PLAYED A ROLE IN LAZAR'S SELECTION IS HUNGARIAN UNWILLINGNESS TO FLY IN FACE OF WELL-KNOWN SOVIET ANTI-SEMITISM BY PLACING HUSZAR IN NUMBER ONE GOVERNMENT POSITION IN HUNGARY.
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